

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, June 28, 1911

Beinn Bhreagh, near Baddeck, Nova Scotia. June 28, 1911. Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell, 1331 Conn. Ave., N. W., Washington, D. C. Dear Mabel:

Little Alec with Miss Kibler and Miss Denning in charge is at the Point doing nicely. The other children are at the Lodge none the worse for their long and tiresome trip.

I enclose a copy of a letter to Mr. Augustus Post which I think you would like to see.

I am now obliged to put away all thoughts of sheep, salt water, and hydro-aeroplanes (a curious mixture of subjects) and devote all my attention to a letter to Dr. Crouter on the affairs of the A.A.P.T.S.D., V. B., etc. Things have reached a critical stage and I think it is my duty to go down to the meeting at Rochester, N. Y. July 5 and stir things up. Dr. Crouter has determined to resign from the Presidency of the Association and it is proposed to elect a successor July 5. Mr. Booth has resigned the superintendency of the Volta Bureau and it is proposed also to elect a successor. Then the whole question of the policy of the Association, the conduct of the Volta Review, will come up. It is unfortunate that such subjects should be discussed at a meeting in the middle of the summer. I hope to have Dr. Crouter postpone his resignation until the regular annual meeting of the Board in December. 2 if not to a later date. It is proposed to elect Mr. Lyon as President. This would be an admirable selection; but it would be unfortunate, I think, to make any change in the Presidency during the present transitory period, as Dr. Crouter's resignation at the present time would convey the impression that he disapproves of the new policy of the Association so that it would be calculated to injure the Association among professional teachers of the Deaf.

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I think also, while it is necessary that the Board should take official notice of Mr. Booth's resignation, it would be a mistake to elect a successor at this time. (I enclose copy of letter to Mr. Booth).

I have been so long out of touch with the members of the Board that my personal presence at the meeting in Rochester seems very desirable, even at some personal inconvenience to myself. Both Dr. Crouter and Miss Yale know of my dread of hot weather in the States and yet they both have urged my presence in Rochester. I have, therefore, about made up my mind to go. Could not you and Elsie join me there and come back to BB via Toronto and the St. Lawrence?

I am now trying to get my thoughts together for a letter to Dr. Crouter on the whole situation and I think the best way of beginning is to dictate something upon the subject in this letter to you.

The key-note to my remarks about the V. B. will be that sufficient funds are not available at present to provide a salary commensurate with the importance of the position of 2 Superintendent of the V. B. We can only afford the salaries of clerks. I would, therefore, propose the appointment of an honorary director, or directors of the work of the V. B. Such persons to serve without salary directing the work of assistants of the grade of clerks. I would not again appoint a superintendent of the V. B. until we have funds sufficient to secure the best man available.

This means that our efforts should be directed mainly at the present time to the increase of our available funds. How is this to be done? There is only one answer, unless a Carnegie should leap into the field:— Through the Volta Review and the increase in the membership of the Association.

A professional journal of interest chiefly to teachers of the Deaf cannot be made to pay, even its own expenses, far less give financial support to the general policies of the

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Association; for the reason that teachers of the Deaf constitute a very limited class of persons. The number is known; we can say with certainty that if every one became a member of the Association, still the membership fees would be insufficient to support the Review. If there is any hope in realizing financial support from the Review it lies in creating a non-professional class of members.

The attempt to do this lead to the adoption of the new policy of broadening the Review which came into effect just before I left the United States. This new policy, although imperfectly applied, has now been in operation for a year and it would be well to look at the increase of membership 4 and the increase of financial returns during the past year for an indication of the success or failure of the plan. Mr. Booth and Mr. Noyes have supplied me with the following figures relating to the number of active members in the Association from its organization up to May 1911. The returns for the present year, therefore, are incomplete. I have only included in the annexed table persons who had actually paid their membership dues by May 1911.

I have divided the returns into three periods:— 1890–99, the summer meeting period before the Association Review was started; 1900–1909, Association Review period; 1910–1911, the Volta Review period. The Association Review started in the latter part of 1899 after the summer meeting in that year so that the membership for 1899 was probably slightly affected by the establishment of the Association Review. The Volta Review, if I remember rightly, was started towards the end of 1909 in 1910 April so that the membership for that year may have been somewhat affected.

Active Membership of the A.A.P.T.S.D.

1890 —

1891 262

1892 354

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1893 196

1894 394

1895 170

1896 286

1897 152

1898 150

1899 345

1900 288

1901 373

1902 450

1903 345

1904 445

1905 445

1906 570

1907 558

1908 512

1909 620

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1910 736

1911 991

These results are shown graphically in the following diagram:— In addition to the 991 persons entitled to vote on Association affairs on May 16, 1911, there were also 121 members 5 whose dues for 1911 were unpaid at that date. Assuming that these persons will ultimately pay their dues this brings the active membership in the middle of 1911 up to 1112 persons (shown by dotted lines in the diagrams). But this does not even yet measure the increase for 1911 for there were also 146 subscriptions, of which all but 13 had been paid by May 16, 1911. As the subscribers are not technically members they have not been included in the returns shown in the diagram.

During the Summer Meeting period the curve of membership shows great fluctuations. The numbers increased at the biennial summer meetings, and fell off immediately afterwards with a general downward trend. After the summer meeting in 1899 the Association Review was started; and during the Association Review period the general trend of the membership has been upwards. The fluctuations in the curve during this period probably reflect the efforts of the President to increase the membership of the Association by occasional a 6 appeals to the members for new nominations. The establishment of the Volta Review inaugurates a new period in which the increase of membership is most marked. When we consider that the returns were made on May 16 it is probable that the membership curve will extend even higher than the extremity of the dotted line before the year is closed.

There can be no doubt, therefore, that the establishment of the Volta Review has been successful in producing a great and substantial increase in the membership.

The increase in financial returns has been given by Mr. Grosvenor in his letter to Dr. Crouter of June 19, 1911 as follows:—

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1908 \$1200.00

1909 1460.00

1910 1850.00

June 1911 3050.00

We have every reason, therefore, to be encouraged by the marked success of the new policy and it should be our object now to profit by our experience of the past year so as to improve the Volta Review and lead to a still further increase of membership.

Two or three interruptions have stopped the flow of thought so I will stop for the present

Your loving Alec.